Casualty and Memorial Affairs Operations Center

CASUALTY ASSISTANCE OFFICER TRAINING

PURPOSE

To provide Casualty Assistance Officers

(CAO) with the training necessary to ensure

they provide the servicemember's next of kin

the best assistance possible

OBJECTIVES OF CASUALTY ASSISTANCE

- Assist the NOK during the period immediately following a soldier being declared missing or deceased.
- Take care of "the HEARTS" of the NOK
- Eliminate delays in settling claims and paying survivor benefits
- Assist the NOK in resolving other personnel-related matters

CASUALTY ASSISTANCE OFFICER

- CAO represents the Secretary of the Army
- Officer/Warrant Officer or Senior NCO
- CAO will be equal in grade to that of the casualty and/or to the NOK that assistance is being provided
- CAO will be released from all conflicting duties/responsibilities

WHO RECEIVES ASSISTANCE?

The NOK of:

- Active duty military
- USAR/ARNG enroute to/from/participating in Active Duty Training (AT, ADT, FTNGD, IADT, ADSW, SADT, TTAD or IDT)
- Soldiers in AWOL status
- Army retirees
- Soldiers separated from the Army within 120 days
- DA civilian employees OCONUS & CONUS TDY
- DA dependents OCONUS

Preparation for CAO Duties

- Be prepared to assist the family during their greatest time of need
- Treat the family as you would like your family treated; give them your full attention
- There is more to being a good CAO then completing the paperwork; take care of their hearts.
- The NOK's lasting view of the Army will be based on the service you provide

PHASES OF CAO DUTIES

- PHASE I - Period from notification to burial
- PHASE II - Period from burial through approximately 90 days from burial

PRIOR TO INITIAL CONTACT

- Review circumstances surrounding casualty incident
- Discuss case with casualty notifier
- Review Chapter 6, AR 600-8-1
- View Casualty Assistance Videos
- Review Casualty Assistance Officer Guide For The Casualty Assistance Officer
- Prepare a DA Form 5516 (Casualty Assistance Referral Card)
- Obtain a copy of DA Pam 608-4 and DA Pam 600-5
- Obtain information on status of remains

INITIAL CONTACT

- Call the NOK within 24 hours after notification
- Never state that you have been appointed to assist them
- Inquire about immediate problems
- Arrange first visit
- Advise PADD to delay making funeral arrangements pending briefing on funeral benefit options

THE FIRST VISIT

- Wear a Class A Uniform
  - Class B Uniform on all subsequent visits
- Initial visit should be brief -- to determine immediate needs
- Confirm 45 day address and other pertinent data
- Inform NOK of Death Gratuity payment
- Advise PNOK of status of remains
- Disposition of Remains -- DA Form 7302-R
- Never make a promise you can’t keep
- Make an appointment to discuss funeral desires for the following day
- Present DA Form 5516 (Casualty Assistance Referral Card) to the PNOK along with appropriate DA Pam

THE SECOND VISIT

Limit Business to the Following:

- If not already paid, deliver the Death Gratuity check
- Ensure the DA Form 7302-R has been completed
- Assist PADD in determining funeral desires
- Answer only specific questions you are qualified to comment on -- Do not speculate

BEFORE THE FUNERAL

- Visit the PNOK regularly to keep them completely informed
- Make preliminary funeral plans, but don't set date until you have confirmed shipping date for remains
- Finalize funeral arrangements with PNOK after remains arrive
- Ensure that flag(s)/awards cases are available for presentation
- Escort NOK to funeral home when Funeral Director is ready

THE FUNERAL

- You will attend the funeral wearing your Class A Uniform
- Degree of involvement depends on desires of PNOK
- Go over sequence of events with NOK
- Coordinate with Burial Detail/Funeral Director
- Present Lapel Button
- Make every effort to fulfill PADD's funeral desires

AFTER THE FUNERAL

- Schedule appointment to visit PNOK two days after funeral
- Encourage PNOK to review DA Pam 608-4 and/or 600-5
- Be knowledgeable and able to converse on benefits and entitlements
  - Unpaid pay and allowances
  - Veterans Affairs
  - Social Security
  - State Benefits
  - Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)

APPLICATION FOR BENEFITS/ENTITLEMENTS

- Present detailed information on benefits and entitlements
- Assist NOK in filing for benefits and entitlements
  - Escort NOK to VA and Social Security Administration
- Assist NOK in obtaining a new ID card
- Assist NOK in preparing correspondence to request reports of investigation
- Use DA Form 2204-R as a checklist
- Follow through to ensure all benefits/entitlements are received

FOLLOW UP VISITS

- Provide NOK a copy of the TAPS brochure
- Complete DA Form 2204-R and forward to CAC NLT 120 days after case assignment
- Follow through on any matter not completed
- Provide further assistance as requested
- Ensure PNOK is furnished with CAC telephone number and knows how to obtain further assistance

RESPONDING TO THE MEDIA

- If you or family you are assisting does not wish to respond to the media, refer the reporters to the local installation PAO
- Limit your response to discussion of your duties as the CAO

  - Avoid discussion of circumstances surrounding the soldier's death,

    military operations or policies
- Protection of the family's privacy is your primary concern
- Ensure that the family members are aware of their rights concerning the media
- Alert PAO is media attention is anticipated
- Avoid discussing anything that you are not qualified to comment on
- If in doubt, avoid comment

CONCLUSION

- Do not wait for a call to begin getting ready
  - Class A Uniform must be ready
  - Read the CAO guide and become thoroughly familiar with its contents
  - Review AR 600-8-1, Chapter six and appendices E thru U
- The more prepared you are, the less stressful your duty will be
- BE READY TO GO!!!

"There's no more effective way of creating bitter enemies of the Army than by failing to do everything we can possibly do in a time of bereavement, nor is there a more effective way of making friends for the Army than by showing We are personally interested in every casualty which occurs."

GENERAL OF THE ARMY
GEORGE C. MARSHALL
ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF
1944